

# The Posa System under the Ahoms: A Study of Bahatiya Paiks

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## Abstract

This article highlights in detail regarding the Ahom monarch's cordial relations with the hill tribes which was later followed by the Britishers in their initial period in Assam. The Posa system was the backbone of Ahom administration and revenue system, where every able male was registered as the state servant. It was also important for the military power of the Ahom army. Later this system became the worst form of exploitation and made the Bahatiyas an authorised victim. This article also throws light on the Paik system widely prevalent in Assam during the Ahom period and some key differences between Paik and Posa System.

**Keywords:** Paik, Posa, Ahom, Bahatiya, Hill tribes.

## Introduction

The legendary Ahom dynasty was founded in Assam by Sukapha who came from present day Myanmar. The dynasty lasted a large span of 600 years. The Ahoms did not isolate themselves. They assimilated with the other hill tribes as well. They blended with local tribal societies. The Ahom monarch's specially appointed frontier governors to conduct relations with the hill tribes. Some of them are Sadiyakhowa Gohain, Marangikhowa Gohain, Rahiyal Baruah, Kajalimukhia Gohain etc. were important.

During the Ahom period Assam had very little use for money, so the state relied on the Paik system instead of cash. This system ensured a ready supply of soldiers and farmers. People were divided into groups which are known as "Got". These got were placed under some officials (Bora, Saikia and Hazarika). Later the Paik system became a curse for Assamese and played a crucial role in Moamoria Rebellion and eventually decline of Ahom dynasty.

## Results and Discussions

During the foundation of the Ahom dynasty most of the neighboring hill tribes preferred to live in isolation. The initial Ahom kings faced some difficulties in dealing with them. But gradually they succeed in keeping these tribes under control by the policy of peace. Various tribal groups living in the surrounding hills to the north, east and South acknowledged the authority of the Ahom sovereignty. Rather than complete annexation the Ahoms allowed many tribes to maintain autonomy in exchange for loyalty. And here the Posa System emerged where the tribes received goods from the plains in exchange for peace.

## Posa System: an administrative measure under Ahom

Originally this system was introduced by Ahom king Pratap Singha to maintain peace by preventing rai-

ds and outrages by tribes in plain areas. This, Posa was a fixed annual payment in kind paid by the section of the people of foothills of Assam to certain sections of the hill tribes. The people who paid posa were known as Bohotiyas. In lieu of that they got 2/3 remission in labour service under Ahom king. The hill tribes receiving posa used to pay an annual tribute to the Ahom king. Hence, the Posa System was arranged among three parties: the Ahom kings, the hill tribes and the Bohotiyas.

For smooth transactions in the Posa system, the Ahom rulers appointed Bishsyas, duariyas and kotokis. Duariyas were appointed on the frontier to enforce the blocked. These measures used to meet positive results. It was a historical administrative and revenue-sharing arrangement initiated by the Ahom Kings.

### **Similarity with the Paik System**

During the rule of Ahom king Pratap Singha, a minister called Momai Tamuli Borboruah introduced the Paik System. Under this system, every adult male between the ages 16 to 50 was registered as a Paik. A unit of four Paiks called Got. The Paiks in a got rendered service to the Ahom king in rotation and the serving period of one paik was three month (later four). Paiks were divided into two classes - Kanri and Chamua Paik. The kanri Paiks bound to give its service as a soldier during war and as laborers in times of peace. Peasants of affluent families were called Chamua Paik. They were exempted from personal state service. The junior offices of Ahom administration consisted of those Chamua Paiks like Bara, Saikia, Hazarika, Razkhowa etc.

The Paik and Posa, both the system was started by Swargadeo Pratap Singha, one of the most important rulers of Ahom. Both the systems were similar in the field administrative, economic and security mechanism and the aim was also same, to consolidate Ahom power in a peaceful manner. The Paik system mobilized labor for agriculture and defense, while the later functioned as a policy of conciliation with hill tribes. The Paik system consisted able males into gots, while Posa involved organizing Bahatiya khel (mainly peasant) to manage the payment.

### **Some Key Differences between the two systems**

The two systems differ in a number of significant ways. Paik system was organized for the internal Ahom monarchy while the Posa system was an external and diplomatic policy. Though both the system was started by Pratap Singha, but the purpose was not similar. The primary purpose of Paik system was to secure internal security, state service and public works, while the Posa system was introduced to strengthen the border areas, establish diplomatic relation and to prevent frequent raids. Paik system was compulsory labor; in exchange they got tax -free land for cultivation. While in Posa system, the plain villages provided commodities to the tribes, in return of peace.

### **The Bahatiya Paiks under Ahom:**

During Ahom dynasty, a class of Paiks created to render their services to hill masters. Their condition was miserable than the slaves. They were often landless or had very little land. They did not enjoy the same rights as other traditional Paiks. The term Bahatiya comes from the word “bahir” (outside). So they were those classes of Paiks who lived outside their home or outside their original khel. They were appointed in newly conquered frontier areas. They were assigned with expansion of cultivation and most importantly they had to give tribute to the hill tribes in return of peace (posa).

### Conclusion

By the implementation of Paik and Posa system, the Ahoms had proved their efficient policy making. It was best proved by their policy towards the hill tribes. Sometimes the relation with hill tribes was very friendly, while sometimes it becomes hostile. Various factors affected this relation since the initial period of Ahom rule. One of them was the barren land of hill areas. Because of which the hill people faced the scarcity of their daily needs. To meet this scarcity they frequently raided the villages of foothill.

The Ahom government had to tackle this crisis and to protect the subjects of the frontier areas against the raids of hill tribes. Swargadeo Pratap Singha was the first ruler who introduced the Posa system to the – Akas, Daphalas, Miris and Bhutias. He granted some lands to the Nagas in the districts of Sivsagar and Lakhimpur which were known as **Naga-Khats**. The Posa system was continued till the last days of Ahom rule and even during the British era with some modification. In a word we can say that as a result of the Posa system a peaceful atmosphere was created between the hills and plains.

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